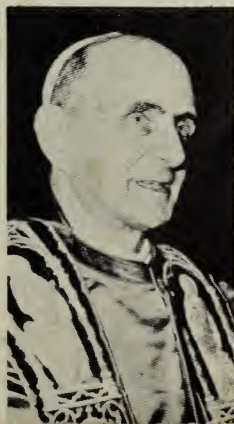
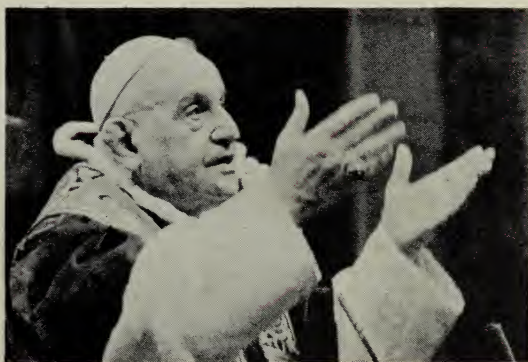
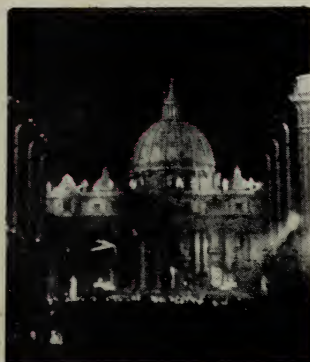


Vatican II Renewal

THE EUCHARIST, MYSTERY OF THE FAITH —

Rev. William Honer



**THE EUCHARIST,
MYSTERY OF THE FAITH**

VATICAN II RENEWAL SERIES

THE EUCHARIST,
MYSTERY OF THE FAITH

by

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INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

The general purpose of the Second Vatican Council is stated in the beginning of the Constitution on the Liturgy in the following words:

“It is the goal of this sacred Council to intensify the daily growth of Catholics in Christian living; to make more responsive to the requirements of our times, those Church observances which are open to adaptation; to nurture whatever can contribute to the unity of all who believe in Christ; and to strengthen those aspects of the Church which can help summon all of mankind into her embrace” (p. 137, *The Documents of Vatican II*, Walter M. Abbott).

The constitutions, decrees, and declaration of the Second Vatican Council apply to the vastly changed world of today the principles of the Gospel of Christ.

I commend the Society of St. Paul for publishing this series of PAMPHLETS FOR RENEWAL, explaining the doctrine of the Vatican Council, under the direction of Father William J. Honer and Father Ignatius Staniszewski, S.S.P., editors. May these pamphlets help the readers to understand the true mind of the Fathers of Vatican II and put their teachings into practice.

✠ Most Rev. Stanislaus J. Brzana, D.D.

Auxiliary Bishop of Buffalo

Introduction

Jesus Christ is the SACRAMENT of SALVATION. He is the center of salvation history, which is nothing but the story of God's continual action to share His Life with man. Again and again God intervenes in human history, drawing man closer and closer to Himself. His definitive intervention took place in Christ. God became man, He came to man, in the person of Christ.

In Christ everything necessary for salvation was given: the final and full revelation of God, the complete and perfect reparation for sin, the power to recreate and transform the universe.

We are living salvation history. We are given to share in the mystery of Christ. We are called to cooperate in the transformation of all things in Christ, in the salvation and sanctification of all creation.

In the Eucharist we find Christ, the SACRAMENT of SALVATION. Christ is present in the Eucharist. He is present in the greatest saving action of God; He is present in His death and resurrection. In the Eucharist we become one with Christ; we die with Him, and with Him rise to new Life.

The Eucharist is Christ. The Eucharist builds up the Church of Christ, the People of God. It is at the same time the fullest expression of that People, "giving thanks" to the God who saves.

What Is The Eucharist?

Just what is the marvelous gift of the Eucharist? In the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the Fathers of the Council gave us this summary: "At the Last Supper, on the night He was handed over, our Lord instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of His Body and Blood, to perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross throughout the ages until He should come, and thus entrust to the Church, His beloved spouse, the MEMORIAL OF HIS DEATH and RESURRECTION: a sacrament of devotion, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is received, the soul is filled with grace, and there is given to us the pledge of future glory" (c. 2).

Pope Paul, in his encyclical on the Eucharist "Mystery of Faith," explains these words of the conciliar decree as highlighting the twofold aspect of the Eucharistic Mystery: that of the Sacrifice of the Mass, in which daily upon our altars the Sacrifice of Christ is made present, and that of the Sacrament, in which we grow in the Christ-life of grace by partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion.

"The Eucharist," in the words of Paul VI, "stands at the heart and center of the liturgy, since it is the font of

life by which we are cleansed and strengthened to live not for ourselves but for God, and to be united in love among ourselves."

To really grasp the meaning of the Eucharistic Mystery, we need to understand God's Plan, the story of man, the whole of Salvation History.

God, who is Goodness and Love, wishes to give of Himself. To this end He drew man out of the nothingness of non-existence, sharing with him being, living, loving. To man He gave of Himself, for He shared His own Life; and when man in his folly and pride rejected this Life, God promised to overcome man's pride, man's sin, to share again His Life with man.

The first stages in the story of man are the stages of preparation for this "second chance." God was preparing man to share again that for which he had been created, God's own Life!

In the fullness of time, God came again into the life of man. God came into the world of man, God became man. Jesus Christ, only-begotten Son of the Father, became man. He lived and died and rose to live again—in order that man might live again the Life of God.

This is man's destiny: to share Divine Life. God made man in His own image and likeness, to share with him His very own Life.

Salvation, death to sin and life with God, is through Christ: Christ who is God, Christ who comes from God, Christ who gives God's Life to man. Redemption is through Christ. Unless man become one with Christ in His death and resurrection, unless man die with Christ and rise to the life of glory, there can be no salvation.

Christ, being Divine Love, loved man to the very end. The night before He died, He gave to man the means of

sharing His sacrifice, the means of sharing His glory. At the summit of His earthly life He gave to man the Eucharistic Mystery, in order that man might share in dying and rising anew, in order that man might nourish and strengthen this life of glory with the Body and Blood of Christ.

Only by sharing in the acts of Redemption, the death and rising to glory of Christ, can we share the Life of God and find salvation.

Christ gives us the Eucharist in order that we may be one with Him, in His Sacrifice and in His Sacrament. He gives us the Mass that we may somehow share in His Sacrifice, that His Sacrifice may in some way be ours. He gives us Himself in Eucharistic Communion that we may be nourished and sustained in the Divine Life God shares with us.

With Christ, in Christ and through Christ, especially the Eucharistic Christ, we share the Life of God!

The first of these is the fact that the
 number of cases of the disease has
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 This is due to the fact that the
 disease is now more common in the
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 The second fact is that the disease
 is now more common in the children.
 This is due to the fact that the
 children are more exposed to the
 mosquito than the adults. The third
 fact is that the disease is now more
 common in the women than in the
 men. This is due to the fact that the
 women are more exposed to the
 mosquito than the men.

The Mass — Memorial of Christ

Some things are too good to be forgotten; certain events need to be recalled.

Every people has its heritage. As Americans we have our Independence Day when we call to mind the events which gave us freedom. We have Memorial Day when we honor all who fought and died that we might live in freedom.

Israel, the Chosen People of the Old Testament, had its memorial, the Pasch or Passover Feast, and our Jewish friends continue to celebrate it.

By a special ritual meal they celebrated yearly the saving acts by which the one true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph, brought His People out of slavery in Egypt, to a new life, through the Sinai Covenant, in the promised land.

With the Passover Meal they recall the "passing over" of the angel of death, the act of God by which the Egyptians were finally forced to allow them to leave Egypt; they celebrate as well the "passing over" of the Red Sea, the events of the Exodus, all the efforts of God to form them as His own People.

When God came unto His own, He celebrated a new Pasch. Christ alone was able to pass from this world of sin and death into the eternal life of God. Christ alone could bring about the redemption of man. He alone is the bridge from sin to salvation, from death to life. Salvation lies in the death and glorification of Christ.

We share salvation, we are saved from sin and its effects and brought to eternal life, by sharing in the act of redemption. Only if we share in some way in the dying and rising again of Christ can we be saved.

The Pasch of Christ is His Death and Resurrection by which He, not for Himself but for man, passes through death to glory. This is the supreme moment in the story of man. The abyss between man and his Maker brought about by sin is bridged. Again man may share the Life of God. Christ is that Life. In Christ and with Christ man may pass from death to life, from sin to sanctity. Through participation in the saving act of Christ, sharing in His sacrifice, man is saved and comes to share in the very Life of God.

But how are we to be one with Christ in His redeeming act? Christ died far away two thousand years ago; how can we join Him in that one redeeming act? We cannot become contemporary with Christ's death and resurrection; it happened once, never to be repeated. And even if we could go back in space and time to Calvary, we could not join Christ in His redeeming Pasch, His Passing from this world to the Father. Christ's Pasch, His saving sacrifice, was personal to Him. He died alone; alone He rose in glory.

How then are we to join Christ in the act of Redemption? How are we to become united with Christ in passing from death to life, from sin to sharing God's Life?

On the evening before He entered into His own Pasch, Christ created a marvelous and mysterious means of sharing in His death and resurrection. He gave us a Paschal sacra-

ment that could introduce us into His redeeming act. At the celebration of the Jewish Passover, He took bread into His hands. He blessed it and broke it and said: "Take and eat, all of you; this is my body given for you." Then when they had finished the meal He took a cup of wine and told them: "This chalice is my blood shed for you."

If we wish to understand the Mass, we must understand this: the Mass makes Christ present in His redeeming act. The Eucharist is Christ in the act of redemption. Christ does not say simply "This is my body," but "my body GIVEN for you," not simply "my blood," but "my blood shed for you." This food which Christ gives us is the "bread of Life," and unless we eat of it we shall not have eternal life.

In order that we share Christ's redemption, He must in some way enter our very being. The Mass is our Saviour communicating Himself to us. In the Mass Christ is present to us in His redeeming act. He gives Himself to us, and we become united with Him. We share His sacrifice.

"Do this in memory of me." Christ commands His own memorial. Not only must man remember what Christ has done, but he must share in it. Man has a part to play in the acts of Christ, in order that he may partake of redemption.

The Mass is the memorial of Christ's saving acts. It is a memorial that is living and life-giving; no mere ritual, no mere drama is the Mass.

Through the Mass Christ makes Himself present, with His redemptive act, in every time and place. He does this in order that the Church, each and every one of us, may in every time and place, take part in his redemptive act.

In the Mass Christ is made present in the eternal act of passing from death to glory. Through this Paschal sacrament He presents Himself to us that we may be one with Him and thus share in His Redemption. In the Mass we

become one with Christ, and with Him we die, with Him we rise to life in God!

The saving acts of Christ, His death and resurrection, are the greatest events in the story of man. They form the highpoint in God's effort to give Himself to man, to share His Life.

They are too good to be forgotten; they need to be recalled.

The Mass is the memorial of Christ. The Church, the new People of God, recalls these events, these acts, and re-lives them in the Mass!

The Mass is the memorial in which Christ is present to His Church, the memorial in which the Church shares in the sacrifice of Christ.

The Mass — Christ's Sacrifice

The Sacrifice Christ offered on Calvary is **UNIQUE**. Christ offered **ONE** sacrifice, the only one of its kind. It is unique precisely because it is perfect. This is one of the key thoughts St. Paul stresses in his letter to the Hebrews: "By His own blood He entered **ONCE** into the holies, obtaining eternal redemption" (9:12). Or again, "By **ONE** oblation He has perfected forever all those that He has saved" (10:14). While the Old Testament sacrifices had constantly to be repeated and renewed because they were incapable of bringing man back to the life-giving holiness of God, Christ offered a single sacrifice, perfect and complete, by which He Himself entered into glory, by which He leads with Him all who are one with Him.

Protestants are quite right to affirm the uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice. There is only one sacrifice, which took place once and for all. It has never been repeated nor is it repeatable. Christ died once; He cannot be put to death again.

And yet—the Eucharist is a sacrifice. The Church believes, on the strength of Scripture and her own ancient and uninterrupted tradition, that the Mass is a true sacrifice. This is the teaching of the Lord Himself: there is no other

sacrifice than that of the Cross, and every Mass is a true sacrifice.

This is the marvelous and myterious fact of our faith: the Eucharist is the selfsame sacrifice of Calvary. The Mass cannot be another sacrifice. It cannot be a reproduction or repetition; it must be that one and only sacrifice offered by Christ two thousand years ago. The Mass is the sacrifice of Christ brought mysteriously and marvelously into our own lifetime.

Christ commanded, "Do this . . . : " change bread into my body offered for you, wine into my blood shed for you; make present my body and my blood offered and immolated to the Father for you!

This is the Mass: the marvelous means chosen by Christ to make present to us His sacrifice, to span space and time in His saving acts. At the words of Consecration Christ is made present in the act of redemption: He is present as Redeemer in the midst of His Church.

No matter how many millions of hosts, there is only one body of Christ. No matter how many millions of Masses said, there is only one sacrifice. It is the Sacrifice of Christ, the sacrifice He offered on Calvary. The Mass is this one sacrifice, entering our lives.

In order that we may share in His saving acts, Christ, in the mystery of the Eucharist, makes present to us His unique sacrifice. He wishes us to take part in His redeeming act. He wishes us to be one with Him, to die together with Him, and to rise with Him to the glory of Life in God.

When God made His COVENANT with Israel, Moses signed and sealed the agreement with sacrifice. He took the blood of young bulls and sprinkled half of it on the altar which represented God, the other half on the people. By this symbolic act, God and the Hebrew people became one family, blood relatives as it were.

In the new and everlasting testament Christ signs and seals the new COVENANT between God and man, by sacrifice. Again blood is shed, and by His blood we are all of us saved. By partaking of this sacrifice, by actual acceptance of the body and blood of Christ into our lives through the Eucharistic Mystery, we renew and ratify this covenant: we are God's, we give ourselves completely to Him, and He shares His own life with us. In the Eucharist Christ shares His sacrifice with us, and through this sacrifice, we are "blood" relatives of Christ, sharing the very Life of God.

The Mass is Christ's Sacrifice!

The Mass—Our Sacrifice—Sacrifice of The Church

The Mass has no meaning unless we participate! Christ makes present His sacrifice in order that we may share in it. Unless we somehow unite ourselves with Christ in His dying to the world of sin and rising to a life of glory, unless we share in His priesthood and join in the offering He makes to the Father, the Mass has no real meaning.

On Calvary Jesus Christ offered a perfect sacrifice. Jesus Christ, true God and true man, was the priest, the offerer, in that sacrifice. He was just as surely the victim, the offered, in that sacrifice. He offered Himself to His Father.

Everything in that sacrifice was real—Christ's gift of Himself, the immolation, the consecration. Everything was personal to Christ; He carried out His sacrifice in His own person. He alone was the priest; He alone was the victim. Upon the wooden altar of the cross He offered His gift, the bloody, anguished gift of His own being.

Why should Christ present Himself to us, in every time and place, with His redeeming act? Why should He share with us His sacrifice? Why is His sacrifice, personal and perfect, to be made present everywhere and always? Why

does He command us to continue to celebrate this mysterious rite in His memory?

The answer is clear: in order that we, Christ's brothers, may, in every time and place, have a part in His redeeming act; in order that His sacrifice, altogether personal to Himself, may in this manner be shared by us, becoming personal to us, involving us as it does Him.

The meaning of the Mass is this: Christ wishes us to unite ourselves with Him in the offering of an acceptable gift to the Father. In the Mass we become one with Christ, sharing His sacrifice, dying with Him to the world of sin and rising with Him to the glory of new life.

We can go through the motions of the Mass. We can stop short at the gestures and hymns of a worship that is nothing more than a sign. We can assist at Mass without our hearts really in it. However, unless we participate in Christ in His death to the world and His life of glory, unless we accomplish in our own persons the sacrifice of Christ, we are not really celebrating Mass, we are not exercising our Christian priesthood, our Mass is meaningless.

The Mass is Christ's sacrifice and ours. We can offer it only by dying and rising in Christ. We can celebrate the Eucharistic mystery only through sincere personal union with Christ, through personal involvement in His redeeming act.

Through Christian Baptism we are made one with Christ, we share the Christ-life. We share as well in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. By Baptism we possess the priestly power to offer sacrifice, and the sacrifice we offer is Christ's.

The Church knows no priesthood other than that of Christ; she admits no sacrifice other than that of Calvary. Every member of the Church partakes of this priesthood, possessing the power to offer this sacrifice.

It is the whole Church which is one with Christ in His priesthood and in His victimhood. We as members of Christ's body, the Church, join Him in the priestly act of offering His sacrifice; we join Christ the victim of this sacrifice by adding our gift to His, offering ourselves with Him.

On Calvary Christ, sole priest, offered Himself, sole victim. In the Eucharistic Sacrifice we share, through this marvelous gift of Christ, the priesthood of Christ: we offer His sacrifice to the Father. We offer Christ in the supreme act of redemption to His father; but, we join ourselves too to Christ the victim of this sacrifice, we add our bit to the gift of Christ, dying with Him and through Him rising renewed!

The Mass is Christ's sacrifice and OURS. It is Christ's sacrifice made present in our lives that we may share in it, that we may play our part in it.

The Mass is the whole Church offering Christ's sacrifice and being offered in it. The Mass is the Church, and every member must fulfill his role. Salvation depends upon it!

The Mass — Magnificent Exchange

Christ has given us the Eucharist that we may be one with Him in the very acts by which He wrought our redemption. Our Redeemer wished us to encounter Him and unite ourselves with Him in those saving acts.

Every time we celebrate Holy Mass we recall to our minds those saving acts. But Mass is more than just a memorial, more than just remembering. Every Mass is a present-time, here-and-now application of the redeeming acts of Christ in our lives.

In the Mass we encounter God through Jesus Christ. Then, in the moment of this sacrificial encounter between ourselves, new Chosen People, and our God, there is effected a magnificent exchange. We give ourselves to God and He gives Himself to us. Thus we have communion: we are one with God, we share His Life. God's will is accomplished—our sanctification, our sharing in the very Life of God.

Even a quick glance at the structure of the Mass manifests this encounter and exchange. The Christian Family assembles to worship the God of love, to offer sacrifice to the Father.

What happens when friends meet?

Why, of course! They exchange words, words of greeting, words of friendship.

In the Mass we meet God. Look at the first part of the Mass. In the renewed Liturgy, it is called the Liturgy of the Word. It is nothing else but an exchange of words.

We speak to God. We proclaim our unworthiness to share this sacrifice; we ask His mercy; we sing a song of praise to His glory.

Then God speaks to us. He speaks through the prophets, His spokesmen of old. He speaks through the Apostles, harbingers of His Good News. He speaks to us through His Son, and through the Church which echoes the voice of the Son.

When we have exchanged words with our God, precisely because our worship is sacrifice, we proceed to an exchange of gifts. We give to God; God gives to us.

First we prepare our gift to God. We take bread and wine, simple yet staple elements of our daily life. These gifts we would offer to God; and yet, to God such gifts are meaningless. Therefore we put meaning into our gifts: we make them mean US, we put ourselves into the Mass, making the bread and wine meaningful, because they mean US, because they symbolize the offering we really make at Mass, the ever renewed offering of ourselves.

Once we have put meaning into our gifts, Christ takes them and gives them VALUE. After all, until the moment of Consecration, our gifts are still just bread and wine. But once Christ pronounces, through His Priest, the words of Consecration, our gifts are His gift: the bread and wine which we have made mean ourselves becomes His Body, His Blood. This is the gift we offer to God.

God in His goodness asks, invites, us to share in the gift we have offered Him. Because He wishes us to share His very Life, God calls us to the banquet table of the

Mass, to partake of the gift we offer in union with His Son.
We are one with God through Communion.

Because God has made us His People, the Mass is a friendship feast, a family affair. The family of God's People, the Church, assembles to exchange word and gift with the God of love.

The Mass is a magnificent exchange!

The Mass — Renewal of The Covenant

In the story of salvation, there are two Testaments, the Old and the New. Each of these Testaments is a pact of friendship, a COVENANT, between the God who saves and a Chosen People. In each instance, it is God who initiates the agreement, God who invites to friendship. Likewise it is God who established the terms of the treaty or pact. The role of the people chosen by God to share His friendship, the role of man, is to accept the invitation, to agree to God's terms, to live the COVENANT.

In days of old, when man was still awaiting the promised redeemer, God chose a people; He formed for Himself a new nation: ISRAEL. This Chosen People God brought from slavery to freedom, from Egypt to the land He had promised. With this People, God made a COVENANT: He would be the God of Israel, Israel would be His People. On Sinai this friendship pact was signed and sealed. God outlined to Moses the terms of the agreement, the commandments Israel must keep to know God's protection, to prosper. And the people of Israel accepted "all that the Lord had commanded." The Covenant was ratified with the blood of sacrifice.

It is this covenant celebrated yet today by our Jewish

friends with the Passover Meal. They recall and renew their commitment to the God of Israel.

In the fullness of time the Redeemer came; God became man. The Christ, the Anointed One, was born, of Hebrew origin. He came unto His own. Through His Chosen People God wished to draw all men to His friendship. Through Christ, God would make a new Covenant, this one with all mankind. He would share His Life with every man. This friendship pact God establishes with everyone who hears His Son and heeds His word. The terms of this new Covenant are similar to those of the old: Faith and commitment through Christ to God who is loving Father. This is the Covenant, the new and eternal Testament between God and His Chosen People, the Church: He will share His Life with all who give themselves to Him through Christ. This covenant Christ signed and sealed with the blood of His sacrifice.

We join this Covenant, we share God's Life, through Baptism in Jesus Christ. It is by Baptism that we die to sin and live in Christ. We are "re-born," born anew, born to the life of God. By the waters of Baptism we are led by God from the slavery of sin to the new life of Grace. We become friends, and even more, sons of God; we are made members of His Church, the NEW Chosen People of God.

At the moment of our Baptism we renounced Satan and sin; we pledged faith and loyalty to Christ. We gave ourselves to God through Christ. We accepted God's offer of love and life. We made an agreement—to live Christ. This is our Covenant!

We renew this Covenant in the Mass. Just as Israel recalled and renewed its friendship pact with the Passover Meal, so too the Church, the Family of God today, recalls and renews its Covenant with a friendship feast, the Mass.

In the Mass we share in the Sacrifice of Christ, we are

made one with Him in the very act of giving Himself to the Father. We renew the gift already made at Baptism, our commitment to Christ, to Christian life. We give ourselves through Christ to the Father. We renew our Covenant with God.

At a most solemn moment of the Mass, the whole assembly of God's People joins in the great "Amen." We proclaim, we shout, our "yes" to God: we *are* His, He is ours; we share His Life because we belong to Him. No wonder that COMMUNION then follows!

The Mass — Family Meal

Heaven is a great banquet to which every man is invited, there to dine at the table of our Father, for all eternity. We have Christ's word for this. There is truth in the poetry of His parables.

This banquet has already begun. The Gospel invitation is extended to all peoples. The ticket of admission is Faith. Through the response of faith to God's gift of Grace, we share, already here on earth, the very Life of God. We are born again, by Baptism, into the Family of God. He calls us to crowd around His table.

Here on earth, this table is Eucharistic. For the altar of sacrifice is also table of communion. The sacrifice is also sacred banquet. As we share the sacrifice of Christ, we enjoy as well the banquet feast God has prepared for us.

The Mass is more than mere memorial. Even the reality of the sacrifice does not exhaust the richness of the action. The Mass is a meal. The Eucharist is a sacred banquet, a festive meal, a family feast. The Mass is the FAMILY MEAL of the People of God!

Just what does this mean?

The words "family meal" bring to mind happy memories. We recall the festive occasions, Christmas and Thanksgiving, but we remember as well Sunday dinner! Even the

ordinary everyday meals are pleasing to recall. The family is never so close, perhaps, as when we sit around the family table, joining in a family meal. There are no strangers at such a meal; any guest is made to feel one of the family. When a family has grown, the happiest occasions are those when all the members return, for a "family meal."

The Mass is the FAMILY MEAL of the People of God!

Every Sunday, the day of the Lord, in every locale, the People of God in every parish gathers around the table of the Lord to celebrate the Eucharistic Banquet.

The universal Church, new Chosen People of God, shares in the same sacrifice, that of Christ. Every Sunday sees the assembly of this People partake of a common nourishing food. That food is Christ.

We offer Mass in the parish. The parish is nothing less than the Family of Christ in our area. It is the People of God in this particular place, the Christian community here and now.

The parish family shares in the parish meal, and the food of this meal is Christ Himself. Sunday Mass in the parish is a joyful meal, a sacred banquet. There are no strangers at this meal; everyone is part of the family. All join in hymn and prayer. It is here that we re-state and strengthen the unity of the Christian Family, the Church. Nourished by the one food of Christ's Body, we share the same Life, the Christ-life. We share the Mass with our neighbors; we worship as a family.

Heaven is not only a great theatre, where we will witness the wonders of God and God's world. It is also a dining-room, where we will sit at the table of our Father, to share in His eternal banquet. God will not be seated on a distant throne; He will be at the head of the table. Heaven is hospitable; it is a feast. To be with God forever is to be at home.

Heaven begins here on earth. God is within our reach and almost at our mercy at the communion table. He himself has told us that the Eucharistic Banquet is the prelude to the divine feast, that unless we eat of this Food we cannot have eternal Life.

In the Eucharist we have a foretaste of Heaven. The Mass is the Family Meal of the People of God.

Eucharistic Communion

Love seeks union! The greater the love, the more perfect is the union sought. The more we love and admire an object, the more we desire to make it ours. Because loving is essentially giving, the greater our love for someone, the more completely we wish to give ourselves to that someone. Precisely because of love, marriage is the most intimate and integral of all human ties. There is no greater love than this, that a man should give his life for his friend. It is the glory of marriage that man and woman love each other to the point of laying down their individual lives, giving themselves wholly and entirely to one another, to share a life of "oneness," becoming "two in one flesh."

God is LOVE! The God of love seeks union. He seeks to be one with us, the work of His hands. God has made us in His own image and likeness, sharing with us the gift of existence. But Divine Love will not stop here; God would share with us His very Life, He would be one with us.

"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, and the Son so loved us that He gave Himself for our salvation." This is love, and never will the world witness greater.

The Christ, the Son of God, came into the world, came unto His own, in order that we might have LIFE; this LIFE is the Life of God, the Life God wishes to share with us. This Life the Father shares with us through Christ, His Son. This Life Christ gives to us through His death and resurrection.

All love seeks union. Yet, only Divine Love can effect COMMUNION! Desired material objects we can beg, borrow or buy, and thus possess. The desired of our dreams, the love of our life, we can meet and marry, and thus possess. But unless God gives, we can never know COMMUNION, union with God.

God has given—His only begotten Son! And the Son has given us Himself, His Life—in order that by His death we may live. Through the Sacraments of Salvation God shares with us His GRACE, the gift that is His Life. Through the Eucharistic Sacrament He gives us the Body and Blood of Christ, His Son, as the nourishing food of our soul-life.

The Eucharist is celebrated like a meal. We are called to the banquet God has made. Body and Blood He gives us, His Life and His Love. We consume the Body of Christ offered for our glorification. We consume Christ, and we are made Christ's body. St. Paul tells us that we all become one body because we partake of the one bread of Christ's Body. We become one with Christ.

The Eucharist is a food which kills and brings to life, a food by which we die with Christ to sin, and with Him rise to glory. We receive Christ and are received into His own body, sharing in His sacrifice, in His redeeming acts.

The Eucharist is communion in Christ, a personal involvement in His redeeming mystery. Divine Love has found a way. The way of Love is COMMUNION. God gives Himself to us, He shares His very own Life with us,

through Communion. Through Communion He effects our union with Him. We are the object of His Love. In the sacrificial sacrament of the Eucharist, He takes possession of us, by the gift we offer; by the gift He offers, we possess Him. The mystery of the Eucharist is COMMUNION! We are God's and He is ours! This is the union Divine Love seeks.

No wonder that Christ tells us that the Eucharist is a foretaste of Heaven!

The Presence of Christ

Christ is in the world! He is present in the world in many ways. He is present in the works of creation; for of all the things that are, there is nothing that was not made in Him. He is present in all our fellow men; for whatever we do to them, we do to Him. He is present in us; Baptism has made us His brothers, for we share His Life.

Christ is present to the world in a special way through His Church. For the Church is Christ; Christ lives on in the world in and through the Church. He founded and formed His Church to carry on and continue His saving mission. He is the Good Shepherd who will not abandon His flock: "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the end of the world." He is present, in every time and clime, to the men of every moment, in His Church.

Even in His Church, Christ is present in many different ways.

Christ is present when the Church prays, for it is He who prays for us, He in whom we pray, He to whom we pray as to our God. Christ is present to our prayer, for where two or three gather in His Name, He is there in their midst. He is the one true Mediator, who prays for us, who takes our prayers and offers them to the Father.

Christ is present when the Church performs works of mercy, for not only do we do to Christ whatever we do to our least brethren, but also it is Christ who performs these works through His Church, continually going about doing good.

He is present in the preaching of the Church. The message of the Church is His "good news"; the Gospel is the Word of God preached in His Name. The Church preaches Christ crucified, and whoever hears the voice of the Church, hears Christ.

Christ is present in His Church when she governs and guides the People of God on pilgrimage to God, for the authority of the Church is from Christ, and what the Church binds on earth is bound also in heaven.

Christ's presence in the Church is even greater when the Church administers the Sacraments. For whether it be Peter or Paul who baptizes, it is really Christ who baptizes, through Peter or Paul. It is Christ who forgives in the confessional, through the ministry of His priests. It is Christ who confirms with His Holy Spirit. In a sublime manner it is Christ who offers His Sacrifice, who makes Himself present in His saving acts, when the Church offers in His Name the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

More marvelous still is the presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. It is Christ who, through the ministry of His priests at Mass, takes bread into His hands and changes it into His Body, and then wine into His Blood. "This IS my Body, this IS my Blood." Nothing could be surer: Christ is PRESENT in the Eucharist! This presence, while beyond our understanding, is REAL. Christ takes bread and wine and changes them, completely and totally, into His Body, His Blood.

This is why we ADORE the Eucharist. The Eucharist is CHRIST, the Son of the Living God. We do not worship

bread; nothing of bread remains, but now the Body of Christ. This is why we RECEIVE the Eucharist; for this food is Christ's Body. This is why we reserve the Eucharist, in cathedral, church and chapel; for the Eucharist is Christ. We praise, we proclaim, we profess, in honor of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. We revere Christ present in the Eucharist.

Christ is present in the Church. He is present in all the words, works and worship of His Church. But in a way surpassing all wonder, He is present in the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

The Eucharist is Christ PRESENT in our midst.

The Eucharist, Mystery of Faith

Sometimes, we think too much. We are tempted to treat a mystery as a problem and an object of faith as mere doctrine. The object of faith is much more than doctrine, it is reality. A mystery is much more than a problem, it is a marvel, an enchantment. A doctrine, after all, needs only to be well understood; a problem needs only to be solved. But reality has never said its last word; a mystery is quite inexhaustible, a continual source of wonder.

The Eucharist is a MYSTERY of FAITH! It is a reality about which we can never say enough. It is a marvel the wonders of which we can never fully fathom. The immensity of this gift of God's love can never be imprisoned within our threadbare formulas.

We do not wonder that Christ, Lord and Master of creation—He who changed water into wine at Cana, He who fed thousands with a few loaves, He who turned dead men into living—we do not wonder that this Christ CAN take ordinary bread and change it into His Body, ordinary wine into His Blood. We do not doubt that Christ, son of the everlasting Father and co-eternal with Him, CAN make His sacrifice present in every place and age.

We do not question the ABILITY of a God who is ALMIGHTY. Because we know this God, and the One whom He has sent, because of our personal relationship with Him (which is our Faith), we accept this wondrous gift. We are overwhelmed by the boundless love which prompts such a gift. No one can grasp the height, the depth, the breadth, the fullness of this LOVE.

Scientists and astronomers can tell us the precise moment at which the sun will rise on a given day. Yet who can fully describe the beauty of a sunrise. The rising of the sun is infinitely more than a scientific formula.

In much the same manner, the formulas of our Faith tell us much about the Eucharist. Yet, it is only the Holy Spirit who, through the gift of Faith, enables us to enjoy the delights of revelation, the splendor of the Eucharistic mystery.

No microscope can probe the real presence. No camera can catch the marvelous change of bread into Body, wine into Blood. The eyes of faith alone can witness the work of Divine Love.

Because we know Christ, because we have personally experienced His love, because we belong to Him, we can accept His word: "This is my Body given for you, this is my Blood shed for you"; "the bread I give you is my flesh, my flesh is food indeed."

The mystery of it all, the marvel of the Eucharist, is not how could God give Himself to us, but rather why should he.

Our Faith affirms the fact; our reason accepts the reality. Not even faith, however, can fathom the manner, the "how" of God's gift. We can only stand in awe of Love that knows no bounds. We can only marvel at the magnificence of such a gift.

Our response to such a gift can be only JOY. Our response is eucharistic—we give thanks. We thank God, who is Love, for this gift of love, this gift in which He gives Himself to us. Our response is LOVE.

The Eucharist is the marvelous and mysterious gift of God's greatness and goodness. It is the mystery of God's presence; it is the mystery of our salvation; it is the mystery of communion, our union with God.

The Eucharist is The MYSTERY of FAITH!



